



[Billing Code 3290-F8]

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

[Docket Number USTR-2018-0028]

Request for Comments and Notice of Public Hearing Concerning Russia's Implementation of its WTO Commitments

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Request for comments and notice of public hearing.

SUMMARY: The interagency Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) will convene a public hearing and seek public comment to assist the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in the preparation of its annual report to Congress on Russia's implementation of its obligations as a Member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

DATES:

September 25, 2018 at midnight EST: Deadline for submission of written comments and for filing requests to appear and a summary of expected testimony at the public hearing.

October 4, 2018: The TPSC will convene a public hearing in Rooms 1 & 2, 1724 F Street NW, Washington DC 20508 beginning at 9:30 am.

ADDRESSES: USTR strongly prefers electronic submissions made through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments in section III below. The docket number is **USTR-2018-0028**. For alternatives to online submissions, please contact Yvonne Jamison at (202) 395-3475 before transmitting a comment and in advance of the relevant deadline.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For procedural questions concerning written comments, contact Yvonne Jamison at (202) 395-3475. Direct all other questions

to Betsy Hafner, Deputy Assistant United States Trade Representative for Russia and Eurasia, at (202) 395-9124.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Russia became a Member of the WTO on August 22, 2012, and on December 21, 2012, following the termination of the application of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to Russia and the extension of permanent normal trade relations to the products of Russia, the United States and Russia both filed letters with the WTO withdrawing their notices of non-application and consenting to have the WTO Agreement apply between them. In accordance with Section 201(a) of the Russia and Moldova Jackson-Vanik Repeal and Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-208), USTR is required to submit, by December 21st of each year, a report to Congress on the extent to which Russia is implementing the WTO Agreement, including the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. The Report also must assess Russia's progress on acceding to and implementing the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) and the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA). In addition, to the extent that USTR finds that Russia is not implementing fully any WTO agreement or is not making adequate progress in acceding to the ITA or the GPA, USTR must describe in the report the actions it plans to take to encourage Russia to improve its implementation and/or increase its accession efforts. In accordance with Section 201(a), and to assist it in preparing this year's report, the TPSC is hereby soliciting public comment.

The terms of Russia's accession to the WTO are contained in the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization and the Protocol on the Accession of the Russian Federation to the WTO (including its annexes) (Protocol). The Report of the Working Party on the Accession of the Russian Federation (Working Party Report) provides detail and context to the commitments listed in the Protocol. You can find the Protocol and Working Party Report on USTR's website at <https://ustr.gov/node/5887> or on the WTO website at <http://docsonline.wto.org> (document symbols: WT/ACC/RUS/70, WT/MIN(11)/2, WT/MIN(11)/24, WT/L/839, WT/ACC/RUS/70/Add.1, WT/MIN(11)/2/Add.1, WT/ACC/RUS/70/Add.2, and WT/MIN(11)/2/Add.1.)

II. Public Comment and Hearing

USTR invites written comments and/or oral testimony of interested persons on Russia's implementation of the commitments made in connection with its accession to the WTO, including, but not limited to, commitments in the following areas:

- a. Import regulation (*e.g.*, tariffs, tariff-rate quotas, quotas, import licenses).
- b. Export regulation.
- c. Subsidies.
- d. Standards and technical regulations.
- e. Sanitary and phytosanitary measures.
- f. Trade-related investment measures (including local content requirements).
- g. Taxes and charges levied on imports and exports.
- h. Other internal policies affecting trade.
- i. Intellectual property rights (including intellectual property rights enforcement).

- j. Services.
- k. Government procurement.
- l. Rule of law issues (*e.g.*, transparency, judicial review, uniform administration of laws and regulations).
- m. Other WTO commitments.

USTR must receive your written comments no later than September 25, 2018 at midnight EST.

The TPSC will convene a public hearing on Thursday, October 4, 2018, in Rooms 1 & 2, 1724 F Street NW, Washington DC 20508. Persons wishing to testify at the hearing must provide written notification of their intention no later than September 25, 2018 at midnight EST. The intent to testify notification must be made in the “Type Comment” field under docket number **USTR-2018-0028** on the www.regulations.gov website and should include the name, address, and telephone number of the person presenting the testimony. You should attach a summary of the testimony by using the “Upload File” field. The name of the file also should include who will be presenting the testimony. Remarks at the hearing will be limited to no more than five minutes to allow for possible questions from the TPSC.

III. Requirements for Submissions

Persons submitting a notification of intent to testify and/or written comments must do so in English and must identify (on the first page of the submission) “Russia’s WTO Implementation of its WTO Commitments.” The deadline for submission is September 25, 2018 at midnight EST. In order to ensure the timely receipt and consideration of comments, USTR strongly encourages commenters to make on-line

submissions, using the www.regulations.gov website. To submit comments via www.regulations.gov, enter docket number **USTR-2018-0028** on the home page and click “search.” The site will provide a search-results page listing all documents associated with this docket. Find a reference to this notice and click on the link entitled “comment now!” For further information on using the www.regulations.gov website, please consult the resources provided on the website by clicking on “How to Use Regulations.gov” on the bottom of the home page.

The www.regulations.gov website allows users to provide comments by filling in a “type comment” field, or by attaching a document using an “upload file” field. USTR prefers that you provide comments in an attached document. If a document is attached, it is sufficient to type “see attached” in the “type comment” field. USTR prefers submissions in Microsoft Word (.doc) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). If the submission is in an application other than those two, please indicate the name of the application in the “type comment” field.

Filers submitting comments containing no business confidential information should name their file using the name of the person or entity submitting the comments. For any comments submitted electronically containing business confidential information, the file name of the business confidential version should begin with the characters “BC”. Any page containing business confidential information must be clearly marked “BUSINESS CONFIDENTIAL” on the top of that page. Filers of submissions containing business confidential information also must submit a public version of their comments. The file name of the public version should begin with the character “P”. The “BC” and “P” should be followed by the name of the person or entity submitting the comments.

Please do not attach separate cover letters to electronic submissions; rather, include any information that might appear in a cover letter in the comments themselves. Similarly, to the extent possible, please include any exhibits, annexes, or other attachments in the same file as the submission itself, not as separate files.

As noted, USTR strongly urges that you file submissions through www.regulations.gov. You must make any alternative arrangements with Yvonne Jamison at (202) 395-3475 before transmitting a comment and in advance of the relevant deadline.

We will post comments in the docket for public inspection, except business confidential information. You can view comments on the [https:// www.regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) Web site by entering docket number USTR-2018-0028 in the search field on the home page. General information concerning USTR is available at www.ustr.gov.

Edward Gresser,

Chair of the Trade Policy Staff Committee,

Office of the United States Trade Representative.

[FR Doc. 2018-17379 Filed: 8/13/2018 8:45 am; Publication Date: 8/14/2018]